The Met Office's outlook for the UK summer 2014

Description

There are headlines in the media today which suggest the Met Office is forecasting that this summer will be one of the hottest on record. However, the Met Office hasn't issued a forecast along these lines.

The news stories are based on information taken from our three month outlook for contingency planners, so let's take a closer look at that.

What does our three month outlook say?

As we've discussed previously, this outlook assesses the level of risk connected to five different scenarios for both temperature and rainfall for the whole season. It's a bit like the science-equivalent of factoring the odds on a horse race.

However, as with any horse race, it's always possible that the favourite won't win – so these probability scenarios have to be used in the right context. This is why they're useful for planners and businesses who plan ahead based on risk, but not that useful for the general public who would like to know which fortnight in August will have the best weather for a holiday.

The current outlook for the whole of the June-July-August period for the whole of the UK says the chance of the warmest scenario happening is 25% and the chance that the period will fall into the coldest scenario is 10%.

So, while the current three month outlook suggests there is a higher chance of above average temperatures than below average, it does not tell us about the type of weather we may see.

Above average temperatures could be reached by milder nights, as can occur in summer in cloudy and wet conditions (for interest, average maximum temperatures for the UK in summer are about 18.6C and average minimum temps are about 10.2C). There is also only a small forecast signal for summer rainfall and therefore, we cannot make any strong assumptions about the weather we'll see.

We saw a good example of this recently – the UK has just had the third warmest spring on record but the season didn't have long stretches of blue skies and high temperatures. Instead we saw mixed weather with a lot of mild nights which contributed to the overall above-average conditions.

So, what will the summer be like?

Obviously there's always a lot of interest to know what summer will be like – how hot will it be, how much rain will we get and where and when will it fall?

Our 30-day outlook (under the text forecast tab) provides a look ahead to the general type of weather we're likely to see in the UK.

Currently it says that after today, the weather is expected to settle down with many areas having some

warm sunshine, although showers are still likely in the northwest.

From mid June to early July, the indications are that the weather will be close to what is climatologically normal for this time of year – giving us a tendency for occasional spells of unsettled weather interspersed with fine and warm spells, much as we have seen recently.

If there is any sign of significantly hot spells or heavy downpours in the forecast, we will keep the country up to date through our forecasts and warnings. Our 'Get Ready for the Great British Summer' webpages also provide useful tips and information to make the most of the summer months, whatever the weather.

Date Created
June 2014

Guest blog: ‘Risk of summer drought at normal levels’

Description

There have been some reports in the press that the Met Office has warned dry weather this June could bring a return of drought conditions to the UK – this is not the case. Here Victoria Williams, Water Resources Advisor at the Environment Agency, explains what the real risks are at the moment:

Every week we measure water resources in England to assess how dry the soils are and how much rain they can soak up, the amount of water flowing in rivers, stored below ground in aquifers and above ground in reservoirs, and the outlook for the coming months.

As we move into summer the overall water resources situation across England is looking generally healthy. This is not surprising given England has experienced the wettest six month period (Dec-May) on record.

Regionally it has also been a record breaker with the wettest six months experienced in southeast and southwest England and the second wettest in central and northwest England.

All our rivers have responded to the rainfall and are currently within normal ranges. Groundwater levels throughout England are within normal ranges and are now starting to recede as expected for the time of year.

We also look ahead by modelling how rivers and groundwaters may respond to different future rainfall patterns over the summer. The results shows a broadly positive picture even if rainfall is below average and point to the risk of drought this summer being no greater than average.

However it is still as important as ever to use water wisely. If the weather does turn hot and dry there can be localised impacts on rivers, the environment and for farming. If this happens we work with abstractors to reduce the effects where possible and water companies will keep their customers informed if needed.

For more information see the Environment Agency water situation reports.

Date Created
June 2014

Early figures suggest one of the warmest Junes on record

Description

Early statistics from the Met Office National Climate Information Centre show that this has been one of the warmest Junes in records dating back to 1910.

Based on figures up until 25 June the mean temperature for the UK for the month is 14.4 °C, making it joint 6th at the moment and more than likely one of the top ten warmest once final figures are in. The warmest June on record is 1976 with 15 °C.

This continues a run of seven months where the UK mean temperature was warmer than average, with all the months from December through to April each being at least 1 °C warmer than the long-term average.

Looking at specific countries it is currently the second warmest June on record in Scotland with 13.2 °C – the warmest being 1940 with 13.5 °C. For England, Wales and Northern Ireland it's currently the 9th warmest.

Rainfall totals have been below normal as a whole and sunshine totals have been near normal, brightest over south-west England and Wales but duller over Scotland.

	Mean temperature		**Sunshine**		**Rainfall**	
1 – 25 June 2014 **	**Actual**	**Diff from 81-10 average**	**Actual**	**% of 81-10 average**	**Actual**	**% o ave**
	degC	**degC**	**hours**	**%**	**mm**	**%**
UK	14.4	1.4	161.1	95	45.9	63
England	15.2	1.2	184.3	101	33.0	53
Wales	14.2	1.0	203.1	117	43.9	51
Scotland	13.2	1.9	113.6	76	67.0	75
N Ireland	14.0	1.2	146.8	98	50.5	66

** Please note these are preliminary statistics from 1-25 June. The final figures will change once statistics from the final few days of the month are included.

Date Created
June 2014